



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Admiral Scott H. Swift
Battle of Midway 75th Anniversary:
Honoring the Heroes of Station HYPO
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
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As prepared for delivery

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be here with you today.

When I take a look at the arc of history in the Pacific, in particular the history of the Pacific Fleet, one of the things I find most compelling is the immense shift that took place in our Navy 75 years ago.

For decades prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, our Navy was centered around our battleships. By the time we fought at Midway just six months later, that entire paradigm had shifted and the aircraft carrier had ascended to its role in the remainder of the fight in the Pacific as the U.S. Navy's primary offensive platform.

That colossal shift was born of necessity after December 7th. The success of that shift, reflected in the central role aircraft carriers still have today, was cemented by the culture of innovation fostered by Admiral Nimitz, and driven by those within the ranks that recognized opportunities for a new approach to the problem set they faced and were empowered by leadership to pursue the most effective way to employ the Fleet.

That culture of innovation was readily apparent here at Station HYPO. The code-breaking team recognized that the limits of their charter and the way that business had always been done before wasn't good enough. Those limits didn't give the Fleet enough insight to defeat the enemy. But the HYPO team, empowered by Admiral Nimitz' broad guidance, had enough diversity of thought and initiative to venture beyond their limits, systemic as well as self-imposed to develop a culture of not accepting being reactive to the past; of not being satisfied with being proactive to present challenges; but taking on the rare effort to being predictive of the future. That is what enabled Nimitz to maximize his limited resources in the fight.

Consider that on December 31st, 1941, when Nimitz took command of Pacific Fleet, the only weapon system he had full confidence in was the submarine force. With that in mind, he gave broad guidance: go out and attack Japanese shipping. He left it to the innovators, the submarine Sailors themselves, to determine the best way to employ their weapon system in achieving his mission orders.

Nimitz did the same with the aircraft carriers. He gave his intent to the task force commanders and allowed them to develop and employ their force. At Coral Sea, Nimitz committed all available carriers, knowing full well what risk he carried in doing so, but also recognizing that the risk of anything less than going all in was even greater. The experience gained through his wise application of strategic, operational and tactical risk at Coral Sea would soon pay huge dividends.

Less than a month later, empowered with critical intelligence developed by Station HYPO, Nimitz again committed his entire carrier force at Midway, allowing his innovators to apply the lessons learned at Coral Sea and exploit their advantage to devastating effect.

At Midway, it all came together: the adjustments made after Pearl Harbor, the experience of Coral Sea, the innovations in employing a carrier force, and the predictive intelligence that let Nimitz maximize the impact of his limited resources. And it was at Midway that Nimitz' confidence in his Pacific Fleet sailors, including the civilian sailors from the Pearl Harbor shipyard, was rewarded.

We know now that the outcome of the Battle of Midway was the assured operational defeat of the Imperial Japanese Navy which in turn resulted in the defeat of Japan's strategic goals, a lesson we are well served to recall and reflect on as it is as relevant today as it was then.

Today, we honor those who broke more than codes as they broke through barriers here at HYPO to enable victory. And we remember the brave Sailors, Marines, and Airmen that fought so valiantly 75 years ago, ever grateful for their service and sacrifice.

Thank you.